Sweet
By: Ali Haidar

There once was a sweet girl named Maryam. She was from Yemen. Maryam was a student of cybersecurity. She was intelligent, smart, and professional at her job.

One day, Maryam received a task from her teacher — to research *Love.*
What is love? Why do people fall in love?

She had never loved anyone before, so the task felt difficult. She tried asking different people about love, but their answers weren't enough for her. She was curious, yet determined to complete her research in her own way. Asking others was the usual university method of gathering information, but she decided to take a different approach — hacking.

She went to the library, opened her laptop, and began hacking into different people's phones without their permission. She focused on those who were in love. Almost every phone was the same — pictures of lovers, romantic messages, and videos.

But among all of these, one phone shocked her. It belonged to a boy named Ali. When she checked his phone, she found that it was full of *her* photos. Every folder, every gallery, every file contained only pictures and videos of Maryam.

Maryam felt uneasy.
Is he a stalker? she wondered. *Or a kidnapper? Maybe he wants to blackmail me.*

While these thoughts ran through her mind, she noticed Ali enter the library. He seemed to be looking for a book. Maryam wanted to confront him but hesitated. Ali glanced at her from the corner of his eye. After picking a book, he walked over to her table.

"Hi, can I sit here?" he asked.

Maryam quickly closed her laptop. "Yeah, sure," she replied.

He sat down and asked softly, "Can I ask you something?"

"Go ahead," said Maryam.

Ali looked nervous. "By any chance… do you have a boyfriend?"

Maryam smiled. "I'm not looking for a boyfriend. I'm Muslim — we don't date. We get married."

Ali's expression changed. With curiosity, he asked, "So… do I have to talk to your father for our marriage?"

Maryam smirked slightly. "Yes, you'd ask my father, and he would ask me for my acceptance — and I would refuse."

In a low voice, Ali said, “I’m also Muslim. We could have a halal marriage. You just have to say yes.”

She replied firmly, “Look. First, I’m not interested in marrying you. Second, I like Chinese guys — which means you should find someone else. Don’t waste your time on me.”

After hearing that, Ali didn’t say another word. He quietly left the library.

Maryam sat there for a while, still looking through his phone. Among her photos and videos, she found a file named *Sweet.* It was a letter.

Inside, it said:

“I am alive, but I am not living.
When I sleep, I am not truly sleeping.
I look at things, but I cannot focus.
Because someone lives in my mind who will not leave me — yet she is not with me.
When I see her, my heart feels like it will explode.
My body freezes when she’s around.
My brain cannot think of anything else.
I am scared.
Do I call this love?
What if it’s just attraction?
Is this what people call one-sided love?

It has been four years since I’ve felt this way about her.
If I love her, I do not expect her to love me back.
Sometimes, accepting things as they are is the most peaceful feeling in the world.”

After reading this letter, Maryam sat quietly, thinking deeply.

She finally understood what love truly is.

In her report, she wrote:

“Love is not a feeling.
It’s not a choice.
It’s not a person.
Love is *acceptance.*

When we accept someone or something completely, that is love.
Sometimes, loving someone means letting them go and wishing them happiness.
Love doesn’t mean we must have the person we love beside us — sometimes, simply being a small part of their life is the most beautiful feeling.

To love everything, we must learn to accept everything.”